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SUBJECT: SITREP 2. DINK ASSAILANT ARRESTED; HIGH LEVEL
REPRESENTATION AT FUNERAL TUESDAY, JANUARY 23

REF: A. ISTANBUL 038
[1](#)B. ANKARA 112

[1](#)1. (U) In the aftermath of the January 19 murder in Istanbul of Agos weekly editor and founder Hrant Dink, his suspected assailant, 17-year old Ogun Samast, was arrested by Turkish National Police Saturday evening as he stepped off a bus in Samsun en route to his home in Trabzon after his father reportedly recognized his picture on television and notified police. Half a dozen others possibly linked with the killer were also arrested in Trabzon.

[1](#)2. (U) Memorial and funeral services will be held on Tuesday, January 23, where attendance is expected to be high. Ceremonies will begin at 11 a.m. local time in front of the Agos newspaper office in the Osmanbey district of Istanbul (where Dink was murdered.) Following a short Memorial Service organized by the newspaper, a hearse will carry the casket to Taksim Square. Mourners may follow on foot. From there, the hearse will drive at a quickened pace to the Armenian Patriarchate for the funeral service to be held in the Virgin Mary Church of Kumpkapi. Mourners will continue their march to the patriarchate arriving in time for the service to begin at 2 p.m. The service itself will be led by Armenian Patriarch His Beatitude Mesrob II Mutafian, followed by interment at Balikli Cemetery near the patriarchate.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Foreign Minister Gul will lead Turkey's official delegation. (PM Erdogan has a prior event with Italian PM Prodi; President Sezer will be with Polish President Kaczynski.) Several dignitaries from the Armenian Diaspora have been invited and are expected to attend, including Archbishop Khajag Barsamian from the American Diocese of the Armenian Church in New York. Reportedly, FM Gul has invited Armenian government officials to attend; Embassy Ankara is following up with MFA. The Ecumenical Patriarchate's Chancellor Metropolitan Theoliptos of Iconium, leaders of the Jewish Community and others will attend from other minority communities. The Ambassador and Consulate staff will attend, as will British, German, French and Canadian Ambassadors are also expected to attend.

[1](#)4. (U) The Prime Minister directed that other prominent intellectuals connected with Article 301 ("insulting Turkishness") charges be given protection. We understand that the GOT has now assigned bodyguards to approximately 20 prominent personalities, including Elif Shafak, who was acquitted in September 2006 and Orhan Pamuk, whose case was dropped on procedural grounds.

[1](#)5. (SBU) Turks nationwide continue to express shock, sorrow and shame over the assassination. In addition to the politicians' statements (ref b), newspaper columnists have paid tribute to Dink's achievements and speculated on

possible motives for the murder. Human rights groups, journalist and publishers' associations and the general public have staged marches and vigils across the country. Many Turks see the tragedy as, at the same time, an opening for progress in Turkish-Armenian relations. "Milliyet" columnist Can Dunder, for example, expressed hope that the killing could lead to the opening both of the Turkish-Armenian border and of formal diplomatic relations. The president of the Human Rights Association told us he believes the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and opposition Republic People's Party (CHP) will begin to ratchet back their nationalist rhetoric and that there will be a renewed discussion on freedom of expression. There were signals from AKP's weekend party retreat that both may be in the offing. Tomorrow's funeral - who attends and its aftermath - will be key.

JONES